

2/26/00 Crushed

A 25-year-old worker was killed when he was pulled into a piece of machinery at a bottling company. The victim was a worker for a temporary service, but had been assigned to this bottling company for about a year.

The equipment is called a depalletizer. Its function is to take a layer of bottles off a pallet through the use of suction cups on the end of a mechanical arm (rake), and place the bottles onto the production line. The victim was caught by this rake arm of suction cups, and pulled on to the top of the pallet. The suction cups pressed down on the worker and against the pallet, suffocating him. The victim had been working on a part of the production line that was very noisy and was not easily visible to other workers. A coworker, who noticed that the machine was not working, discovered him. This investigation is ongoing.

Questions to ask?

- Is your machinery properly safeguarded through the use of devices such as light curtains, interlock switches or barriers that prevent any part of the worker from entering the machine?
- Do you regularly evaluate your production process to determine if hazards exist?
- Do you have a lockout/tag out program?
- Are your workers trained in this program?
- Are your workers trained in the use of the equipment? Is refresher training provided?
- Do you rotate your workers to other machines within the shift to prevent fatigue?